

Cal Poly Views
**National Women's History Week with
Dr. Lillian Jones and Dr. Sylvia White**

Cal Poly Pomona University Library

National Women's History Week Summary

Cal Poly Views was a weekly interview series broadcast on radio station KWOW-AM. Episodes were 15 minutes long and were hosted by Cal Poly Pomona Director of News and Publications, Ed Pierce, in conversation with Cal Poly Pomona faculty or administrators on general interest topics.

Dr. Lillian Jones was the acting chair of the Ethnic and Women's Studies Department and Dr. Sylvia White was professor of Urban and Regional Planning and acting director of the International Center.

Subject Headings

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Women's History Week

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**Cal Poly Views National Women's History week with
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February 25, 1986

*Interview conducted by Ed Pierce
Transcribed by Lorecel Gravino*

KWOW presents Cal Poly Views.

EP: Hello everyone, welcome to KWOW's presentation of Cal Poly Views. Fifteen minutes each week devoted to interviews concerning subjects of current general interest and featuring faculty or administrators from Cal Poly Pomona. This is your host Ed Pierce, talking today with Lillian Jones, Acting chair of The Ethnic and Women's Studies Department and Sylvia White, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning and Acting Director of the International Center. Together, in recognition of National Women's History Week, we'll discuss, *Women: Builders of Communities and Dreams*, which is the theme for this week, which begins today. Welcome ladies.

LJ: Thank you.

SW: Thank you.

EP: Let's begin with you Lillian, if we may, what is National Women's History Week? How long have we had it? Why do we need it?

LJ: Alright. National Women's History Week is a week, weeklong celebration throughout the nation proclaimed by a resolution from Congress in celebration of women's participation in American history. For the last nine years through resolutions of Congress, we have all over the country been celebrating Women's History Week. It's usually timed to coincide with International Women's Day, which is March the 8th, which has been around a long time, since 1910 or so. It is celebrated in universities, in communities, in public and private schools on the elementary and secondary level.

EP: I understood that it is necessary to re-establish this every year. Why not like Thanksgiving, Mother's Day and a few others that just sits there?

LJ: Well, it's not a national holiday.

EP: Why not a third week in March is proclaimed as National Women's Week?

LJ: Well it has been, but it needs to be reintroduced each year. I guess Congress has not seen fit to make it one that simply goes on. It seems to us, those that began initiating this, nine, ten years ago, an important symbolic gesture on the part of Congress every year to reaffirm the nation's

commitment to the contributions that women have historically made in this country. It gives us an opportunity to reclaim and re-count the contributions of not only important women, whom we are accustomed to hearing about, but an opportunity to focus on the contributions of everyday women, doing everyday things.

EP: Yes, the grandmothers of each of us.

LJ: The grandmothers, the great-grandmothers, and the mothers of each of us, individually and collectively. It gives—I think an important part of it is—that it allows the school system (if they're not doing it the rest of the year, which we of course hope that they are doing the rest of the year)—it does give them an opportunity one week a year, to have essay contest, to encourage students to research the contributions of women, to have exhibits, to focus on the contributions of all women to American history. It also I think, if you look at some of the celebrations that go on, it gives schools and those of us in the University an opportunity to allow women who are currently making history, to be focused to. It's not just people who are dead and gone.

EP: And before we go to Dr. White and talk about the international scene and women in developing nations, our own have undergone a change have they not? In the last 25 years in the labor asset, as an effective force in the labor market economics?

LJ: Well I think people are conscious that there has been a real change in the last 25 years in terms of women's participation in the labor force. I usually caution people to say large numbers of women have always worked outside their home.

EP: Yes.

LJ: What we see is a real change in participation of middle-class, white women who in much larger numbers are now working in the labor force. But for instance, World War II almost all the labor force in this country for war material and every other thing was contributed by women.

EP: Historically for what? 100 or more years in the agricultural—?

LJ: Since the beginning, as I'm sure Sylvia will talk about in a minute, agricultural work is in fact women's work in most of the world. And certainly, women have, along with men contributed a significant portion of the labor that was vital to an agricultural economy during the years that this country has had an agricultural base. But women's participation not only in wage labor, or in agricultural labor, but in keeping with the theme for this year, would like to also for people to remember women's contributions in terms of philanthropic, charity, volunteer, organizations, cultural and religious organizations, and communities where women have been the mainstay as well as women's participation in labor force and a few women's participation in the political arena.

EP: Dr. White, do you think that the developing nations, women in developing nations and as I told you, I kind of like that phrase better than third world—I guess when I think of that, I think of the kinds of things however that I'm more aware of in Africa or Middle East that are not so much cultural and social as they are economic women that own the farm land, owned the animals, have become a force in that way. We're celebrating National Women's History Week. We're recognizing what's occurred in the last 25 years or so, how long has this change which was recognized with the Women's Conference in Nairobi last year, been effective in the international place?

SW: I think women have, women's contribution to their economies and their societies has been recognized for some years even prior to the Nairobi conference, but and certainly even prior to 1976 when the Decade for Women was established by the United Nations. But it is only in the last 10 years that real attention and a real focus has been placed upon women's contribution particularly their economic contribution to development in developing nations.

EP: How do women do it? How do they become builders of communities as well as dreams?

SW: Women all over the world have been extensively involved in the planning, the design, of their communities. They are the primary force in many of their countries, from the village level, all the way through to major urban centers, in demanding that a variety of public services and public facilities, be built as part of the communities. After all, women all over the world traditionally, and even in their modern roles, are associated with the nurturing and the care and the growing up of humanity and in fact are the people who are most associated with making sure that their children and the elderly are going to get the kinds of services that they need. How else is it then that women might go to their town councils anywhere in the world or their village chiefs and demand that certain services be put in place, demand that certain public facilities be built?

SW: But also, an overwhelmed and really an overlooked part of women's contribution has been in the design and actual building of houses and townships. All over the world, they are the actual builders of houses. Here in America, the American Indian women, are in fact the designers and the physical builders of their pueblos. In Africa and in Asia that is also the case, and I think we tend to forget women's physical contribution to the building of these communities.

EP: What is the Women in Development project or program here at Cal Poly Pomona?

SW: Women in Development is a project that is funded by United States Agency for International Development. On campus we hold seminars, brown bag lunches, essay contests and other activities that are designed to educate our faculty, staff, and students about the contribution of women to economic development in the third world nations. We have a two-fold purpose. We also review all technical assistance projects that our university is engaged in, and we are engaged in quite a few overseas assistance projects, to make sure that they pay attention to women's needs and women's contributions in the countries that they're operating. We also try to have qualified

women faculty on these projects who will attend to women's needs and integrate them into the projects.

EP: Now back to Lillian Jones' area, I have just learned that here at Cal Poly we have the only department of its kind, which combines ethnic and women studies. There are other schools that have Women's Studies, they have Asian Pacific, Africa, Afro-American whatever, but that yours is a combination of it. Describe it a little bit, if you will and it's interdisciplinary—and that doesn't mean we furnish everybody, what interdisciplinary?

LJ: The department began as Ethnic Studies on this campus in the 70's, around the same time that many other campuses began to have Ethnic Studies Department. And the people who taught Ethnic Studies wanted to incorporate a gender component in the material that they were teaching in classes and the attention to, not only the dynamics of ethnicity and race and ethnic studies, but the gender component focused people on, or encourage people to begin focusing on, courses dealing with women. And about six years ago, formally, we began then too as an equal focus in the department [to] offer women's studies courses. I always tell people that, when I get inquiries from all over the country, because we are so unusual. In many places Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies are in a state of mutual hostility, and we are not in a state of mutual hostility on this campus. And I always tell people that the business of our department is to attend to race class and gender and when I say we're interdisciplinary, I mean that we have people who teach in our department from a variety of the traditional disciplines, the quote, "traditional" disciplines.

EP: Such as?

LJ: Poli Sci, Anthropology, History, Literature, but that in the course material that we use, we pull from all of these disciplines material that we think is relevant to the context of what we teach. So we are concerned with, for instance in Women's History Week, we're concerned with the contributions of all women in their own communities, whether their ethnic communities, religious communities, different class communities, and we think sometimes those contributions are different one from the other. Women have, because they belong to different communities, oftentimes different experiences and different histories and that's one of the reasons why we want to focus on the complexity of the variety of women's histories.

EP: I don't recall now which one of you mentioned to me and whichever one did probably respond to this, but there, if there are women listening who want to develop, encourage, establish and gain support for recognition kinds of programs in the community, there is aid in getting this accomplished. Can you describe it?

SW: Yes, if there are folks listening, who are unaware of any activities in their own community and they would like to be a part of planning something or being, be a part of carrying it out, there is a National Women's History Project in Santa Rosa, California, that supplies community groups and educational groups with a variety of resources and suggestions, materials that can be ordered through a catalog. And I'd like to give that address if I could.

EP: Go ahead.

SW: So that people could write. It's called the National Women's History Project, Post Office Box 3716, Santa Rosa, CA 95402. I would also suggest to people in the community to talk to your children. Find out what's being done in terms of public and private school, elementary and secondary education. Most schools are celebrating Women's History Week with curricula, with special assemblies. So many times, school children are more aware of it than people in the community because the schools have begun to focus in on that.

SW: I would also suggest to people that if they care to be a part of Cal Poly's celebration, that we have a series of events that people might, that are certainly open to the community and people might want to participate in. We are currently—we have a women's art show that has been curated by Professor Diane [?] Pasos, Chair of the Art Department. It's the second annual women's art show, contemporary women artists, called *Showcase 86*, which is currently showing in the University Union Art Gallery. Our library will have a display of 19th century books. Books published in the 19th century by and about women for those folks who wander in and out of the library. We will be having our annual Women's History Luncheon on Thursday, March 6 and a series of films, which if people want to know the specifics they can either call the Women's Resource Center here on campus or the Media Resource Center. Gina Webster's being very helpful in lining up a series of films, historical and contemporary films on women's contributions so there are variety of things happening here at Cal Poly. That if something's not happening in your community or even if something is and you would like to participate, feel free and to join us. You're most welcome.

EP: Well thank you, Lillian Jones, thank you Sylvia White, and thank you ladies and gentlemen, for listening to this week's edition of Cal Poly Views. Fifteen minutes devoted to discussing topics of current and general interest if there are subject which you would like to hear discussed by faculty or administrative experts from Cal Poly Pomona, please write to Cal Poly Views, Office of News and Publications, 3801 W. Temple Ave., Pomona, CA 91768. We hope you'll join us again next week at the same time for another interesting interview when KWOW presents Cal Poly Views. This is your host, Ed Pierce speaking.

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